TIDBITS
Tips and Helpful Links

Assessment Division

Planning for Diverse Classrooms

In anticipation of the demands of the coming school year it's important to consider the diversity of your classroom community and how you'll tailor lessons to meet the varied needs of your students. In our information-rich world, the teacher's role is increasingly moving toward more of a facilitator or catalyst – supporting learning rather than imparting knowledge. And learning, as defined by the Arizona Common Core Standards, will shift toward much more problem solving, analysis and synthesis of information, and be measured by the students' ability to explain and defend their reasoning. For students to master these techniques, teachers will plan explicit instruction incorporating modeling with think-alouds, offer multiple opportunities for collaborative and independent practice, and integrate real-world applications that help students to establish connections and make sense of their learning.

Using a UDL approach in lesson planning can significantly increase accessibility for the range of student needs in your class. **Universal Design for Learning** has been adapted from a concept developed by Ron Mace, an architect who designed buildings with accessibility in mind from the outset. In the educational setting, UDL involves an evaluation of goal language as well as teaching methods, materials, and informal assessment. The aim of UDL is to remove barriers and increase access to the core of the goal; it does not change

or decrease expectations for student learning (that's modification).

UDL focuses on activating three networks within the brain: recognition, strategic, and affective.

The recognition network involves the information we take in through our senses. For UDL, it is activated by presenting information in a variety of ways – offering multiple representations using combinations of visual, auditory, and tactile/kinesthetic approaches.

The strategic network is where we organize information and plan to carry out tasks. Individual approaches vary in the selection, categorization, and manipulation of information within this network. Here, teacher modeling with think-alouds and graphic organizers can help students develop meta-cognitive strategies to better summarize, prioritize, contextualize, and remember important information. Response modes that offer multiple means of expression provide the necessary flexibility for a range of student approaches.

Features of the affective network, such as engagement and motivation, make up the third critical component. To activate this network teachers need to get to know individuals – what interests and motivates them to learn. This network also functions differently in each learner, so developing a class profile to cross-reference alongside lesson planning helps ensure accessibility for all learners. A class profile may detail individual student strengths, needs, and learning preferences to be considered as you develop your lesson plan. With this information at hand you can create a menu of supports to ensure access and involvement. Uncovering learning styles and preferences lead to greater student involvement and contribute to the critical self-advocacy skills that move students toward independence.

Begin incorporating UDL components by analyzing the language in your goals. Focus on the "what", not the "how" – that is, anticipate potential barriers and provide plenty of choice so that students have multiple means to reach the goal.

Next, consider your materials. Include flexible options such as digital texts that can be manipulated by the student, multi-media, visuals, and websites

that contain multiple levels of text complexity as supplemental resources.

Methods of lesson delivery include time for modeling, practice, and feedback. Activating background knowledge is critical for making connections. Offering scaffolding, organizational tools, and detailed rubrics help students understand expectations and helps them progress through tasks while monitoring their own progress.

Consider UDL features in formative assessments as well, offering options such as multi-media projects, art projects, skits, and oral presentations in addition to more traditional methods of evaluation.

General education teachers who plan using UDL techniques are better prepared to provide genuine inclusion experiences for students with special needs. UDL also addresses the needs of students who are excelling in academic areas by offering opportunities to explore topics in greater depth and familiarize themselves with various tools and processes to crystallize learning. The options that UDL provides are useful and appealing to your entire range of learners.

UDL is a framework, not a program. It offers multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression that benefits all learners – not just those with special needs. Investing the time up front by incorporating UDL can significantly lessen the need for extensive retrofitting of lessons, re-teaching, and RTI.

For more information on UDL, visit the following websites:

http://udlonline.cast.org/home (free trainings)

http://www.cast.org   (check free book builder)

http://marylandlearninglinks.org/3816

http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent/ideas/tes/chapter2_2.cfm

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yETe92mwoUE

Coming Soon!

Important updates regarding AIMS-A training, accessing NCSC materials, and NCSC alternate assessment pilot testing…

All updates or important information will be posted on the AIMS-A webpage: http://www.azed.gov/standards-development-assessment/assessing-students-with-disabilities/aims-a-2/

Links to Important
Information for Students Taking the General Assessment

- Newly released PARCC Sample Items

- PARCC Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual

Important Note…

IEPs, Alternate Academic Standards, and Arizona Common Core Standards (ACCS):

2013-2014 is a transitional year for assessment. To be eligible for the alternate assessment, students must continue to have goals and objectives aligned to our alternate standards. However, as a state we have already fully transitioned to the implementation of the Arizona Common Core Standards (ACCS), and teachers are utilizing them for instruction and IEP development. Incorporation of both into IEPs is necessary and can be accomplished by integrating alternate academic standards along with those from ACCS. Teachers can reference the NCSC instructional resources for assistance in taking the next steps in accessing the Arizona Common Core Standards (ACCS).

We will continue to use Arizona Alternate Academic Standards for Science until further notice.

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